

Challenging Violence and Victimisation Discourses in International Relations. The experiences of Men and Women during the Rwandan Genocide

Desafiando los discursos de violencia y victimización en las relaciones internacionales. Las experiencias de hombres y mujeres durante el genocidio de Ruanda

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Recibido: 30/10/2017

Aceptado: 14/12/2017

doi: <https://doi.org/10.20318/femeris.2018.4076>

“When do women gain from being treated as ‘mother’, ‘dependents,’ or ‘vulnerable,’ and when from being seen as autonomous individuals?”

Cynthia Cockburn

Abstract. The study of the roles of men and women during violent conflicts and post-conflict situations has traditionally restricted the experiences of women to those of victims, and those of men to violent perpetrators. This paper adopts a feminist constructivist approach to explore how traditional gender discourses have sustained the victimisation of women and the association of violence with men in the roles of aggressors and protectors. Throughout the case study of the Rwandan genocide, this research illustrates gender stereotypes tend to ignore on the one hand the role of women as violent perpetrators, and on the other hand, the victim status of men during conflicts. This study attempts to show experiences of Rwandan women were not limited to those of victims, but they planned and participated in genocidal violence and abuses. Additionally, and also contrary to traditional gender discourses, Rwandan men compromised the first targets of violence during the conflict. This thesis concludes that a broader and deeper understanding of conflict studies and ultimately world politics can be acquired by challenging traditional gender discourses, and investigating and recognizing the multifaceted experiences of women and men in conflict and post-conflict situations.

Keywords: victimisation, violence, masculinity, femininity, “beautiful souls”, “just warriors”, passivity, agency.

Resumen. El estudio de los roles de hombres y mujeres durante situaciones de conflictos y de los escenarios post-conflicto, tradicionalmente ha restringido las experiencias de las mujeres a las de las víctimas, y las de los hombres a los perpetradores de violencia. Este docu-

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mento adopta un enfoque constructivista feminista para explorar cómo los discursos tradicionales de género han sostenido por un lado, la victimización de las mujeres, y por otro lado, la asociación de la violencia con los hombres bien sea en su papel de agresores y/o protectores. A lo largo del estudio de caso del genocidio de Ruanda, esta investigación ilustra que en situaciones de conflicto los estereotipos de género tienden a ignorar, por una parte, el papel de las mujeres como perpetradoras violentas y, por otra parte, el estatus de víctima de los hombres. Este estudio intenta mostrar que las experiencias de las mujeres ruandesas no se limitaron únicamente a las de las víctimas, sino que planificaron y participaron de manera activa en la violencia y abusos genocidas. Además, y también en contra de los discursos de género tradicionales, los hombres de Ruanda conformaron los primeros objetivos y víctimas de la violencia durante el conflicto. Esta tesis concluye que se puede adquirir una comprensión más amplia y profunda de los estudios de conflicto y, en última instancia, de la política mundial, desafiando los discursos tradicionales de género e investigando y reconociendo las experiencias multifacéticas de mujeres y hombres en situaciones de conflicto y posconflicto.

Palabras clave: victimización, violencia, masculinidad, feminidad, “almas hermosas”, “guerreros justos”, pasividad, agencia.

Introduction

The study of the debate about the relationship between gender and conflict has recently received more attention in the fields of international relations and world politics. Whereas men have been traditionally described to have a certain degree of familiarity with violence in their role of defenders or aggressors, women have been commonly portrayed as passive victims of conflict because of their caring and nurturing characterization. However, women's key contributions in the past decades to armed, political and ideological struggles in countries such as Vietnam, Nicaragua, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Rwanda have challenged and sharpened the debate about traditional stereotypes and roles of women in international relations (African Rights, 1995a: 7). On the contrary, the experiences of male victims, widely ignored and silenced despite men comprising a considerable proportion of the victims of violence during conflicts in Yugoslavia, Liberia and Rwanda, are increasingly capturing more attention too. The current refugee crisis in Europe is highlighting how not only women and children but also men from Syria, Afghanistan and Somalia among others, have been and still are victims of violence and abuse. In both cases, when the violent agency of women and the victims status of men have been recognised, they have been traditionally explained as a kind of aberration of femininity and masculinity, respectively (El-Bushra, 2000). Women violent perpetrators break with the conventional perception of women being seen 'as the protectors and givers of life rather than the destroyers' (OSCE, 2005: 3). Accepting men are victims and can suffer from violence and abuse constitute another challenge to traditional discourses surrounding world politics. Traditional gender discourses associate feminization to *weakness* and *passivity* and consequently the victim status of men has often been used in international relations to feminize the enemy, and ultimately as a symbol of *defeat* (Hunt, 2010). Feminization means a loss of masculinity, and if the enemy is not *masculine* any more, it simply does not imply a threat of violence any longer.

Although this paper acknowledges that other critical approaches to security such as post-structuralism are valid to deconstruct traditional gender discourses and con-

flicts as such as the Rwandan one, this study embraces feminist constructivism. From a feminist constructivism point of view, conflict studies have often ignored the convenience to undertake a gender analysis to acquire a more in-depth understanding of the roots of the conflict and the motivations of the actors involved (El-Bushra, 2000). Feminist constructivism asserts traditional gender discourses have sustained different and opposed images of the participation of men and women in relation to conflict situations (Sjoberg, 2009).

Throughout the case study of the Rwandan genocide, this paper aims to show the experiences of men and women during conflict situations are not restricted to those of aggressors and victims. It is true that women are severely affected by violence, but so are men and children. Thus, this research explores how women, apart from being victims, contribute to sustain conflicts and engage with violence. In these cases, women are said to perform as male, challenging *dewomanization* and *macho* stereotype discourses. Furthermore, it asserts how men apart from being violent perpetrators should have the right to be recognised in their role as victims of violence without being labelled as *feminine*. Ignoring the diverse roles of women and men in conflict and post-conflict situations is to the detriment of having a more detailed assessment of international, regional, national and local conflicts and therefore of the fields of security and international relations (Naraghi-Anderlini, 2007: 207). In this line, this study reasserts the importance of the introducing a gender lens in the field of global politics because on the contrary, 'the victim status of men would continue being underreported along with the aggressor status of women, since these areas do not fit the notions of warlike manhood and peaceful womanhood' (Holter, 2004: 73). Finally, the insight gained from this study could be valuable for the analysis of other conflicts in which traditional gender stereotypes still prevail and obstruct outside-commentators from recognising the diversity of the experiences of men and women during conflict. This recognition will give policy makers and peacekeepers a more detailed picture of the scenario, and of the roots of the conflict. Consequently, security issues will be better addressed and understood.

Feminist Constructivism: Femininities, Masculinities and Gender in International Relations

Feminism entered the landscape of international relations and world politics at the end of the Cold War as part of the so-called *third debate*, offering an alternative to the state-centric mainstream theories of realism and neoliberalism. Despite the diversity of approaches within the feminist project, the different feminist approaches share the distinctiveness of their strong commitment to *gender equality*. Whereas some feminist approaches wrongly make women their sole subject of study and consequently encounter several limitations within their research, the feminist project is not only about women, but also about men and masculinities (Tickner, 1997: 627). Therefore, feminism does not only add women to the international scenario, but incorporates gender as its core perspective

to study world politics. Furthermore, *women* cannot be considered a fixed object of study because they are not a homogenous group (Durham and O'Byrne, 2010: 45). Women, as in the case of men, are influenced by a variety of contexts, and thus, women are different and so are their identities. With the aim of successfully incorporating gender and the multifaceted experiences and identities of men and women in the field of international relations, feminist constructivism is regarded to be the most convenient approach. The feminist constructivist perspective reflects and studies not only the '*what*' about global politics, but also the '*how*' about the influence gender stereotypes have in the shaping of world politics (Steans, 2003: 436). As Squires and Weldes point out, feminist constructivism focuses its attention on how power relations produce and perpetuate gender identities throughout social and cultural practices and discourses (2007: 186). According to feminist constructivism, traditional gender discourses and practices have created a *male and female binary*. Therefore, there are some behaviors and roles in international relations that are expected to be displayed by men, whereas there are others expected to be performed only by women. In consequence, feminist constructivists reveal social constructions and discourses have legitimated the prevalence of a set of gender stereotypes.

Taking the latter into consideration, feminist constructivist scholars such as Sjoberg (2009) and Tickner (1997) agree the common omission of gender in the study of international relations does not mean world politics is a gender-neutral arena. In fact, Enloe (1989) and Cockburn (2010) suggest that the *genderless* appearance of the international system is sustained by the prevalence of realism and neoliberal frameworks in world politics. To further confront criticism from state-centric traditional approaches, feminist constructivists have defended, following Cynthia Enloe's feminist motto which reads 'the international is personal', that gender is not only about interpersonal relations, but about international politics (1989: 196-197). By this, feminist constructivists mean individuals are affected by their context, and that sociocultural practices and discourses ultimately shape how individuals interact with the state. In the same line, those practices and discourses shape how states interact with individuals and other states and non-state actors. To sum up, gender relations as the interactions between states, can indeed be regarded as *relations of power* (Cockburn, 2010: 108). As in the case of state actors, gender relations are based on *domination* and *asymmetry*. To feminist constructivists, realism and neoliberalism approaches try to sustain a false neutrality that ultimately *naturalise* or hide gender inequalities and reinforces masculinity as the normal rule in all the levels of the international system (Tickner, 1997: 614). This world order in which neutrality hides the supremacy of masculinity and men and the subordination of femininity and women is what feminist constructivists call *patriarchy* (Cockburn, 2010: 108).

Accordingly, feminist constructivists assert gender stereotypes must be overcome to gain complementary perspectives that were previously ignored within the global politics discussion. Enloe ironically hypothesizes that paying attention to the multifaceted experiences of men out of their traditional assigned neutralised roles 'can expose how much power it takes to maintain the international political system in its present form' (1989: 3). As Zalewski argues:

International politics is *what we* make it to be... We need to rethink the discipline in ways that will disturb the existing boundaries of both that which we claim to be relevant in international politics and what we assume to be legitimate ways of constructing knowledge about the world (1996: 352).

Therefore, the diverse role of men within international relations, including those roles standing 'out' of the traditional gender discourses such as those of *male victims*, are included in the feminist constructivist project. Importantly, the steps to follow to effectively incorporate a gender lenses in world politics is not meticulously detailed, being it a major limitation to the implementation of the feminist constructivist project. However, it is undeniable that the inclusion of gender will provide a more complex, meaningful and reliable picture of world politics.

Victimisation and Violence in International Relations

Femininity, Masculinity and Violence

The gender logic that prevails in the international relations sphere has commonly portrayed women as victims in need of protection, allocating femininity in a subordinate position in the social hierarchy. Feminist constructivist scholars such as Enloe (1989), Cockburn (2010), Tickner (1997), Sjoberg (2007), Gentry (2007) and Zalewski (2010) argue that social and cultural processes and structures have sustained identification between *femininity* and *victimhood*. This image has been maintained through conservative gender discourses that associate *womanhood* with mothering, pure, peaceful, and caring characteristics (Marway, 2011; Sjoberg and Gentry, 2007). While there have been some exceptions throughout history in which violence has been associated to women, such as the figures of Joan of Arc and Catherine the Great, women have commonly encountered mythos such as those of the *Madonna* or the subordinated wife and daughter, that neglect women's perpetration in violence (Ness, 2007: 84). In this line, Carpenter reveals that:

Gender discourses both ascribe certain attributes to men and women respectively –men *are* aggressive, women *are* nurturing– and generate principled gender ideologies that govern behaviors and configurations based on these attributes –men *should* be soldiers, women *should* be mothers– (2004: 234).

Carpenter's explanation fits well with Elsthain's myth of the *Just Warrior* and the *Beautiful Soul*. This myth states that discourses about femininity and masculinity have been sustained by the traditional stereotypes of the '*just warrior*' (masculinity) and the '*beautiful soul*' (femininity) (1987: 4). Thus, this myth implies women are peaceful, passive and innocent individuals who need to be protected, while men are related to war, and therefore to violence, in their role of aggressors or a protectors (OSCE, 2005: 3). Echoing

the latter, Enloe (1983) clarifies that the relation between militarism (violence) and women has traditionally been one of *exclusion*. Traditional gender discourses do not conceive women as violent perpetrators but as '*beautiful souls*', limiting their roles as those related to cooking, nursing and reproducing (Enloe, 1983). Other scholars such as Shepherd (2008) and Puechguirbal (2004) criticize victimisation discourses surrounding women in world politics are sustained by the identification of women with children, and use of the concept *womenandchildren* to denounce it. With the aim of further illustrating the conservatism in understanding the relation between femininity and violence in international relations, we should refer to the scandal provoked by the photographs of the United States soldier Lynndie England posing with Iraqi prisoners in Abu Ghraib. Victimisation discourses sustain the victim status of women, and therefore, England was not seen as a soldier, but as a *female* soldier, and consequently, her violence appeared more abhorrent and unacceptable to the public than those violent acts perpetrated by men.

In conclusion, feminist scholars refuse the parallel association of femininity and victimhood and masculinity and violence, since it ultimately legitimates the prevalence of the victim status of women and the role of men as aggressors in international relations. Interestingly enough, violent and terrorist groups consciously and strategically exploit the prevalence of these images of violence, femininity and masculinity. The construction '*women as victims*' often inhibits the possible theorization of 'women as the benefactors of oppression, or the perpetrators of catastrophes' (Lentin 1997: 12). Violent groups assume women are still not widely considered as potential violent perpetrators in the security debate and consequently 'women generate less suspicion, (...) and are subjected to more relaxed security measures' (O'Rourke, 2009: 689). This study assumes that if gender discourses and practices do not start being studied, traditionally preconceived ideas of the relation between masculinity, femininity and violence would not be dispelled, and a more detailed picture of the security and international relations fields will be missed.

Male victims

As explained above, traditional gender discourses sustain the identification of *womanhood* with *victimhood* and *manhood* with *aggression or protection*. Therefore, whereas the 'normal' role for women in conflict is such of non-combatants, the participation of men in violent acts is commonly accepted and even *natural*. In consequence, the acceptance of the victim status of men constitutes a challenge to traditional discourses. The identification of *victimhood* and *femininity* has actually resulted in feminization discourses. The same way masculinization discourses describe female perpetrators as macho, feminization discourses depict male victims as feminine. This way, men suffering from violence and abuse are commonly stigmatized as *feminine* or *homosexual*, making men more reluctant to report the offences suffered (Hunt, 2010: 120). In addition, rape, sexual mutilation and the appropriation of the enemy's women are practices used to humiliate and reinforce the feminization of male victims (Hunt, 2010; Lentin, 1997). The identification

between femininity and victimisation is strong to such an extent that male survivors from sexual violence, admitted they did not denounce the abuses because 'only women are raped' (Lee, 1997: 95).

Contrary to those stereotypes, men do suffer from the same violence women do, 'including sexual violence, forced conscription and sex-selective massacre' and therefore, the victim status of men must be recognized and condemned too (Carpenter, 2006: 83). Scholars such as Jones (2004) add to this debate that actually men are actually the first targets in conflicts and that they constitute the great majority of deaths in conflicts. Other authors such as Sjoberg and Gentry affirm, without denying Jones' argument about the importance of recognizing the victim status of men, that the reason why men are the first ones to be targeted has its roots in gender stereotypes (2007:148). According to these authors, men are the first targets precisely because they are believed to suppose a greater political threat compared to women who considered passive non-violent actors (Sjoberg and Gentry, 2007).

Female violent perpetrators

As explained in the previous section, the acceptance of the concept of 'male victims' challenges the traditional image of men as 'just warriors'. In this line, the very act of associating women and violence out of the victim status of women threatens the traditional gendered order that constructivist feminists actively criticize. Interestingly enough, aggression and femininity were usually associated to some cultures such as the Viking one in the Middle Ages (Holter, 2004: 73). However, nowadays female violent perpetrators are usually described as *macho* and are sometimes portrayed as some sort of *wild Amazons* who are out of their mind, following the traditional association with *masculinity/aggression* and *femininity/passivity* (Alison, 2004: 457). Women's violence is commonly described as male behavior. In consequence, women violent perpetrators are a contradictory idea in international relations and their aggressor status continues being overshadowed by victimisation discourses. As Alison claims 'security has traditionally been conceptualized in *masculinized military terms* and women have been excluded from this' (2004: 447). Women in armed conflicts are described as '*peaceful* passive bystanders or *indirectly non-violent* supporters who facilitate violence by displaying their *mother, wife* and *protector* traditional roles', being, among others cooks, nurses or undertaking propaganda and fundraising activities among others (Marway, 2011: 222). Thus, the participation of women in political violence is uneasily accepted compared to the one committed by men because 'it fails to fulfill gender expectations' (Ballinger, 1996: 1). Oakley addresses directly this argument by hypothesizing that:

If women killed and damaged to the extent that men do, we would be saying they had all gone mad (...). In the past, we would have called them evil and burnt them as witches (...). We may treat individual cases of male crime as new-grabbing pathologies, but still we accept these as a routine part of life, with little attempt to consider why men as a group behave this way (Oakley, 2002: 46).

Contrary to men who are associated to the public sphere, women have been traditionally relegated to the private one (West, 2004: 3). This is why violent acts committed by women are often explained by examining women's personal background. By focusing only on personal grievances, the political agency of women is denied and so is the recognition of their possible independent engagement in violent acts because of political, socio-economic motivations and ideals. Thus, while men's violent agency can be explained by both political and personal reasons, women's violence is uniquely linked with personal grievances. In this line, Sjöberg and Gentry identify three characterizations commonly used to describe women's violence, the *mother*, *monster* and *whore* narratives, which ultimately reinforce the traditional victimisation of women (2007: 30). Throughout the latter, violent women are *othered* and presented as defects of femininity, some sort of *femmes fatales*. Either they are *bad* women because they suffer from personal traumas, or they are *mad* women who have personality disorders (Marway, 2011: 225).

To sum up, traditional discourses refuse the possibility of women being intellectually able to intentionally choose to embrace violence. Ironically, violent women are portrayed as victims of committing violence. *Women war criminals*, *women terrorists*, *women suicide bombers* or *women genocidaires*, do not fit inside the ideal gender roles. Their embracement of violence ultimately results in a gender transgression (Sjöberg and Gentry, 2007: 7). First, women's choice to be violent is denied, and whenever this is recognized, their agency is removed and somehow explained as a result of their emotional instability or as an aberration.

Nevertheless, women's engagement in conflicts such as the Arab-Israeli one, women's participation in terrorist attacks such as the case of the Black Widows in the Chechen conflict or women's violent involvement in the Rwandan genocide shows that women do engage in violence as much as men do. In fact, as Ness states (2007: 89) women's entry into the public sphere at the end of the twentieth century has allowed women to take up arms and partake in violence, something which was traditionally the preserve of men. Recently, it has been estimated women and girls make up at least around 30 to 40 percent of the participants in different conflicts such as ethno-separatist ones and guerrilla struggles, for example in Nicaragua, Chiapas (Mexico) and Sri Lanka (Ness, 2007: 85; Cockburn, 2010). Equally important, women's engagement in western military forces has increased in recent years. The proportion of women in the US Army rose from 2 percent to around 20 per cent between 1973 and 2008 (Cockburn, 2010: 106). In addition, women are known to have participated in suicide bombings and other violent acts like airplane hijackings, kidnapping and hostage taking.

The Rwandan Genocide

Men and Women in Pre-Genocide Rwanda

Before moving to discuss the role played by women and men in the Rwandan genocide it is important to gain an understanding of how society was structured prior to the outbreak of genocidal violence. Pre-genocide Rwanda was characterized by a patriarchal

structure led by men and male socioeconomic and cultural structures, in which men were not only the household heads but the leaders of the community. Actually, the structure of pre-genocide Rwandan society could be summarized by the following sayings: 'the hen does not crow with the cocks', 'in a home where a woman speaks there is discord', 'a woman's only wealth is a man' (Hogg, 2010: 71). Thus, women occupied a subordinated position within the economic, political and social hierarchy in Rwandan culture (Sharlach, 1999: 391). In addition, men had the rights to property, inheritance and power and 'anything women produced, including crops, cash income and children, was under the control of the male head' even if women were the ones in charge of nearly the 70 per cent of the agricultural work (El-Bushra, 2000: 73). Therefore, as it was said in pre-genocide Rwanda, 'a woman's only wealth is a man' (Hogg, 2010: 71). The majority of women held traditional tasks of homemaking, raising children and serving the community and most of them were relegated to the private sphere, while men were in charge of protecting and defending their families and communities in the public sphere (Baines, 2003: 482; Adler et al, 2007: 216). Furthermore, as Chakravarty indicates 'ethnicity passes down the male line in Rwanda' (Chakravarty, 2007: 236). Thus, men were the 'carriers' of ethnicity, the ones in charge of perpetuating the pureness of their nation. In this line, although interethnic marriages were gradually less common in Rwanda in the 1990s, children would get their father's ethnicity.

Despite Rwandan women were discriminated in mostly all arenas, gender relations were surprisingly more complex than commonly portrayed. Although not being publicly recognized, Rwandan women were said to have a significant role as adviser to their husbands and, in that sense, they had kind of an influential power in the private sphere (Hogg, 2010: 74). It was in the 1980s and 1990s when gender relations started to change slightly with the introduction of new legislation, which opened new domains of the public sphere to Rwandan women (Taylor, 1999). New education reforms were introduced to encourage girls' schooling, and women's groups as in the agricultural area began to be promoted to give women more control over their production and ultimately over their lives (El-Bushra, 2000: 73). Regardless of these new reforms, women could participate and be 'active' members of society 'as long as their new roles did not challenge or jeopardize their role as mothers' (Baines, 2003: 483). Otherwise, women were commonly demonized and said to undermine Rwandan traditions. In consequence, although Rwandan women were not completely out of the public and political life, they continued being largely underrepresented, above all in leadership and top-level management positions.

Victims of the Rwandan Genocide

Rwandan women

Women and girls have been both internationally and nationally identified to be the principal victims of the Rwandan genocide (African Rights, 1995a: 4). Rwandan culture dictated women's place was at home and tradition defined women to be a symbol of peace,

maternity and humility (Hogg, 2010). Consequently, Hutu extremists were influenced by those images and beliefs and therefore conceived Tutsi women as passive, apolitical, subordinated and weak population who did not pose any threat. Nevertheless, the situation started to change by mid-May when most of the Tutsi male adults and adolescents had been killed. By that time, the organizers of the genocide decided it was high time to target Tutsi women precisely because of their role as life givers. Even if men were the ones responsible for passing on ethnicity to their offspring, women were yet the only ones who were capable of conceiving. In this sense, Rwandan women in their mothering and nurturing roles were ultimately the ones in charge of preserving the nation. Hutu extremists began to see Tutsi women as a threat since they were spreading Tutsi ethnicity (Baines, 2003: 487; Domosh and Seager, 2001: 172). Hutu extremists started using the expression 'pulling out the roots of the bad weeds' when referring to the killing of women and children (Mamdani, 2001: 194). With this expression they emphasised they were addressing the true causes of their *problem*. Tutsi women gave birth to the other 'alien other' and the future male enemy, and therefore they had to be exterminated. Nevertheless, Hutu extremists came up with another approach of putting an end to Tutsi ethnicity. Precisely because of ethnicity being passed down the male line in Rwanda, Hutu extremists made of mass rape a war weapon. Although the exact number is unknown, the majority of Tutsi women (and also Hutu oppositionist women) were raped or victims of sexual violence before they were killed. Between 250,000 and 500,000 women are believed to have been raped during the Rwandan genocide and approximately 66% of them have tested positive for HIV/AIDS (Izabiliza, 2003: 2). The genocide organisers intentionally recruited men who were carriers of HIV and forced them to rape women. Thus, HIV became some kind of biological weapon to extinguish future Tutsi generations (Baines, 2003: 488).

Rwandan men

While women and children are described as the main victims of the Rwandan genocide, Rwandan men, as it happens in the vast majority of the conflicts, have been described as the unique combatants and violent actors. Men in both sides of the conflict, men within the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) and the extremist Hutu, supporters of the Hutu led-government and the *Interahamwe*, have been accused of being the principal genocidal perpetrators. Contrary to traditional standards, Rwandan men also suffered from violence and they actually were the vast majority of the victims of the genocide (Adams, 2004).

Because of socio-cultural reasons, male individuals were the first ones to be targeted. As Chakravarty indicates, targeting male population was undoubtedly 'a strategic need to destroy battle-age male non-combatants capable of joining the ranks of enemy soldiers or to eliminate social elites capable of mobilizing resistance (church leaders, opinion leaders and politicians). Because of traditional conception about gender roles, masculinity in Rwanda was related not only to the protection of the motherland, but to public life. Consequently, Tutsi men, unlike women, were the ones who often had received an education

and who consequently held high influential positions in decision-making structures. Following this argument, genocidaires understood that educated and affluent men, but also who were physically healthy had to be the first ones to be targeted for the sake of others. On the other hand, men did not only represent security threats because of their possible ties and performance within the RPF. As mentioned before, they were also the ones legitimately passing on Tutsi ethnicity. Hence, Tutsi men represented a double security threat. For all these reasons, Hutu extremists targeted Tutsi men and Hutu men oppositionists in the first place because they were considered direct and dangerous threats to the viability of the Hutu nation (Baines, 2003: 487). As one female Tutsi survivor recalled, the *Interahamwe* militia 'took all the men and boys, everyone *masculine* from about the age of two. Any boy who could walk was taken. They were particularly interested in men who looked like students, civil servants, in short any man who looked as if he had education or money. They left only very poor men, those who were already wounded and tiny babies [...]' (cited in African Rights, 1995b: 625-626). Finally, Tutsi men survivors, as in the case of women and children, suffered from displacement in the aftermath of the conflict and sought refuge in neighbouring countries (Sjoberg and Gentry, 2007). It is important to mention the controversial debate that Jones introduces when he argues how some Hutu men who were violently forced to participate in the massacres could be defined as 'unwilling executioners' and therefore considered as victims of the genocide as well (2004: 112-113).

Rwandan Women as Violent Perpetrators

As learnt in the previous section, traditional victimisation discourses and gender stereotypes have identified Rwandan women to be the main victims of the genocide, obscuring the role women had in sustaining genocidal violence. Although it is important to note that not every Rwandan woman was a violent perpetrator, and neither was every man, it is essential to highlight Rwandan women ended up with the myth of the '*beautiful soul*'. Despite most of the women who have been reported to be involved in the genocide being Hutu, some Tutsi women and girls took part in the Tutsi resistance and joined the RPF to fight Hutu extremism. Their involvement in the genocide consisted mainly of fund-raising and organizational activities (Taylor, 1999; Sharlach, 1999). However, Tutsi women's involvement has been barely studied in-depth.

On the Hutu side, murdering was planned to be a communal work. The major architects of the genocide adopted a strategy aimed at including the participation of as much of the Hutu population as they could in order to guarantee the impunity of those perpetrating violence (Lemarchand, 1997: 413). As African Rights indicates 'the strong tradition of obedience to authority in Rwanda made it easier for the architects of the genocide to encourage or force *both* men and women to become murderers' (1995a: 4). However, some Hutu women participated in the genocidal acts since they shared the extremist views of the interim Hutu-led government, or because they understood Tutsi extermination could be a golden opportunity to enrich themselves, obtain power or seek revenge (Jones, 2004:

105). Additionally, ethnic solidarity was a crucial motivation for both Hutu men and women and they were highly influenced by the *'Hutu Ten Commandments'*, which demonized Tutsi and accused them all of being accomplices of the RPF. Hutu genocidaires, both women and men, felt they had the responsibility to preserve the purity of their motherland by annihilating Tutsi in order to build a true Hutu model nation. Consequently, in some cases, women and men did not join the killings out of coercion but out of a free and voluntary decision. In other words, they were violent because they *chose* to be. Furthermore, contrary to traditional gender expectations, there were also women among those forcing and intimidating Hutu to participate in genocidal activities (Sharlach, 1999). Most of these women were Hutu educated women because as educated men did, they held a superior status in Rwandan society (African Rights, 1995a: 249). In fact, some women took part in the planning and in the decision-making process which led to the execution of the massacres. Agnès Ntamabyariro, Minister of Justice in the interim government, together with Pauline Nyiramasuhuko, who by then was the Minister of Family Affairs and Women's Development, played a key role in the organization of the killings. These two women along with Agathe Kazinja's, President Habyarimana's wife, are said to have been crucial in plotting acts of genocide, by providing lists of political enemies to be hunted and killed, and by training the militia (African Rights, 1995a: 90-108).

On the other hand, Hutu women who did not hold a high social and political status were also involved in the massacres. Their participation in violence was diverse. Women, including young girls, directly kill, shot, abducted, and hacked to death with machetes and abused Tutsi and Hutu opponents (Sperling, 2006: 638). They also played a key role as informants and denounced Tutsi and Hutu oppositionist who were hiding and the people who were giving them shelter (Jones, 2004: 106). In addition, women and girls were in charge of looting the dead and stripping corpses in a greedily seek of money, clothes and other valuable items (Hogg, 2010). Additionally, they assisted the killers by cooking and taking care of some organizational details. Furthermore, women were crucial in disseminating Hutu propaganda and spreading the genocidal ideology. Actually women were some of the most extreme broadcasters in *Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines*, one of the most atrocious means Hutu used to inflame hatred against Tutsi (Sharlach, 1999: 392). Finally, some Hutu women have been recognized to encourage genocidaires to commit acts of mass rapes and sexual aggressions, such as Pauline Nyiramasuhuko who was 'the first women ever to be charged with rape as a crime against humanity' (Hudson, 2010: 265).

To conclude, it is clear women held a great responsibility in the Rwandan genocide, however their participation is usually sensationalized and personal grievances and details are commonly used to explain their *male* behaviour (Sjoberg and Gentry, 2007). Rwandan women's violent participation has been de-gendered and ultimately *dewomanized* and de-humanized. As Sjoberg and Gentry hypothesize, even when women's violent agency in the Rwanda genocide has been recognized, most of these women have been presented as mad or ill through the *'mother'*, *'monster'* and *'whore'* characterizations (2007: 148). Traditional discourses have implied Rwandan women embraced violence forced by men or because of their sexual depravity that made Hutu women to compete with Tutsi women for men. Ac-

tually, genocidaires have denied the participation of women in the massacres and most of them have focused on the traditional victim status of women to refute women's violence. In this line, one female genocide suspect declared, 'no women were involved in the killings... They were mad people: no women were involved' (cited in Hogg, 2010, p. 69). Another suspect declared that actually:

there were fierce wives who wanted to march off on expeditions and help with the killing, but they were prevented by the organizers, who lectured them that a woman's place was not in the marshes (cited in Hatzfeld, 2005: 100).

Finally, it is important to highlight some women violent perpetrators have actually taken advantage of the traditional relation between masculinity, femininity and violence to deny their participation during the genocide. In regards to the latter, Pauline Nyiramuhuko is known to have declared: 'I cannot even kill a chicken. If there is a person who says that a woman, a mother, killed, then I'll confront that person' (cited in African Rights, 1995a: 91).

Conclusion

The number of victims who were killed between the end of March and mid-July of 1994 during the Rwandan genocide cannot be accounted with certainty. It is estimated that between ten and fifty thousand Hutu and between 500,000 and a million Tutsi were killed' (Mamdani, 2001: 5). This study highlights how the Rwandan genocide was not an uncontrollable outburst of violence, but that it was thoroughly planned long before April. As this study has revealed, everybody, both women and men played a part in the planning and in the killing. In consequence, the case study of the Rwandan genocide, shows how traditional identifications of *womanhood-femininity-victimhood-passivity* and *manhood-masculinity-aggression-protection* are proved not to be sustainable in world politics anymore. This study has exposed how women and men are not limited to the myth of the '*beautiful souls*' and '*just warriors*'. Thus, this thesis has explored and concluded that men are not only (nor *the* unique) violent perpetrators and that women are not only (nor *the* unique) victims of the conflict. The recognition of the experiences of Rwandan women as violent actors and of Rwandan men as victims challenge the traditional patriarchal structure of the country of Rwanda and ultimately traditional discourses in international relations.

On the one hand, the participation of Rwandan women in the conflict and their performance of violence in genocidal acts was as varied and complex as men's and went beyond the traditional role of supporters within the limits of the dutiful wife and daughter. As Ness defends 'the will to violence, rather than being a male characteristic, is gender-neutral and dependent on a host of contextual factors' (2007: 93). Some studies about the Rwandan female perpetrators have tended to describe their actions and attitudes as *masculine* and *macho*. Actually, investigations about Rwandan women violent perpetrators

and their *male* behaviour have been often sensationalised focusing on personal grievances (Sjoberg and Gentry, 2007: 162). However, as the Rwandan case shows, women can be influenced by similar motivations to those of men, whether personal and private reasons or ideological and political beliefs (Hogg, 2010). The aggressor status of women should not be defined as an aberration of femininity but as a component of agency (El-Bushra, 2000: 81). Women should be described in the same way men should, as individuals who are capable of good but also of violent acts. Both women and men embrace violence for a variety of reasons ranging from rational to irrational reasons and from personal issues to political and socio-economic motivations. Obscuring the violent perpetrator status of women ultimately goes against the interests of world politics since a broader and deeper picture of the conflict and in general will be missing.

On the other hand, the victim status of men further deconstructs traditional victimisation discourses. This study has revealed, the victim status of men has been often silenced and a taboo topic because it's simply image poses a challenge to traditional gender discourses identifying the concepts of *victimhood* with *femininity*, and *aggression and protection* with *masculinity*. Throughout the Rwandan case the victim status of men in conflict has been recognized and has further challenged the traditional image of masculinity that identifies men with either the role of aggressors or protectors. Whereas stories about women violent perpetrators have been sometimes denounced by describing women as mentally ill and monsters, male victims have been often pejoratively labelled as *feminine*.

In conclusion, this research has focused on the importance of the recognition of the multifaceted experiences of women and men in conflict and post-conflict situations. Limiting the roles of Rwandan men to those of aggressors and those of women to those of victims goes against bringing justice to Rwanda, and reinforces traditional discourses and ultimately the impunity of female genocidal perpetrators. The examination of the roles of men and women during and after the Rwandan genocide shows how the study of gender and the consequent deconstruction of gender traditional discourses will lead 'to obtain a more comprehensive assessment of the situation and to respond adequately through programming and policy' (Naraghi-Anderlini, 2007: 207). Actually, the progressive recognition of the victim status of men and of women as independent individual in post-conflict Rwanda has led to relative changes in the perception of gender roles and responsibilities within society (Mzvondiwa, 2007: 105).

Thus, this research claims the necessity to acknowledge conflicts as gendered experiences. More in-depth studies about how gender discourses work within local communities in conflict are necessary. Policy-makers and security experts should make a further effort to integrate a gender perspective in the field of security and overcome the restricted theorizing of gender issues within armed and violent conflicts. To sum up, there is a need to increase the political and economic will to raise the necessary resources and the overall formalization of the engagement of the international community in the inclusion of a gender perspective in security matters. The multifaceted experiences of men and women during conflict and post-conflict situations needs to be reported so that a more detailed picture of the conflict is not missed. Obscuring the victim status of men and the aggressor status of

women ultimately legitimates the prevalence of traditional gender discourses and inhibits gaining complementary perspectives about the world of politics (Moser and Clark, 2001). This omission would entail future challenges to the fields of security and international relations, not only in a local scale, but also in the national and an international ones.

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